

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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No. 125

'DIME' NOVELS EXHIBITED IN THE EXPRESS WINDOW

The adventures of Superman and Scorchy Smith are wild enough in this mechanical age, but they differ little in essentials from the trials and tribulations of Frank Merriwell and Nick Carter in the familiar "dime novels" in the early years of this century.

Currently on exhibit in the window of The Lock Haven Express are some of the paper-backed volumes which appeared every week around the early 1900's. They belong to Glenn H. Henderson, a native of Bolivar, Westmoreland County, now Jewel Tea Co. representative here. Mr. Henderson began to collect the old time stories about a year ago.

5 Cents a Copy

The "dime novel" is a misleading title, since most of the copies cost five cents and appeared each week. The ingenuity of the authors in placing their hero in a precarious position before extricating him and sending him on to further adventures was about as great as the present day comic strip artists whose chief figure is always narrowly escaping the jaws of death.

While Frank Merriwell and Nick Carter did not have to contend with all the hazards of the mechanical age, such as airplanes, bombs, torpedoes, radio-controlled instruments of death and what have you, there were always gangs of criminals, desperadoes, speeding trains and even here and there a high-powered automobile. However, on the front illustration of one of the

Nick Carter stories, as the famous villain "battles above the clouds" (on a roof top), the street scene below in 1905 shows largely horse-drawn carriages.

Mr. Henderson says the "dime novels" began to be popular about 1890 and continued in favor until about 1920 when the movies and radio weaned away the younger generation. At one time, the Tip Top Weekly had a circulation of 300,000 copies, and one collector has all 1,400 issues that were printed.

Collection of these old volumes has become a hobby with numerous men and women, so that special catalogues are issued detailing what numbers are available, at what prices, and re-counting rare and special finds.

On exhibit in The Express window are the stories of "Frank Merriwell in St. Louis," "Dick Darlton, the Poor House Boy, or Struggles of a Friendless Waif," "The Liberty Boys and Ethan Allen, or Old and Young Veterans," "A Battle Among the Clouds, or Nick Carter's Criminal Client," "Diamond Dick's Shower of Gold, or The Princess of the Montezumas," "The Mud River Boys or The Fight for Penlow's Mill," "Playing to Win, or the Foxiest Boy in Wall St.," "Young Wild West and the Broken Bowie, or the Outlaws of Yellow Fork," by an Old Scout, "A Blackmailer's Paradise, or Nick Carter Discovers the Hidden Hand," "Fred Fearnot and the Orphan, or the Lock of a Plucky Boy," "The Bradys and the Missing Box, or Running Down the Missing Boy," and "Jack the Juggler, or a Boy's Search for His Sister."

Reasons for Objection

Just what objection could have been registered by parents and others in loco parentis to these tales is a little hard to see in these days. The heroes, always stuffy, and almost over-bearingly priggish in our outlook, always triumphed over evil, and the bad man always met his doom, usually not a too pleasant end. Vice always succumbed to virtue, even though the incident concerned might have been accounted horrifying by then existing standards.

(Sent in by Glenn H. Henderson, H.H.B. #62.)

"THE LAST MAN OF KENO BAR" By Rev. Roland D. Sawyer

I began to dig up a nickle now and then to buy a BEADLES HALF-DIME when I was 12 years of age. They came hard for us in those days up in New Hampshire. We got 20 cents per hundred for cutting red-willow withes for the farmers, or 15 cents per half bushel of cow-slips, or 10 cents a quart for blueberries, if lucky enough to find a customer. At 14 years of age we got 7½ cents per hour working on the highway picking up stones, which WAS a bonanza.

Thus the HALF-DIMES were few. However I recall the titles of at least a score, but the one of whose contents I recall the most, was No. 461 in the HALF-DIME LIBRARY, one of T. C. Harbaugh's mining-town yarns, entitled "ONE AGAINST FIFTY, or The Last Man of Keno Bar."

I suppose it best because the hero, Kit King, was unlike any other hero that I recall, he did not come out on top, but perished in a winter storm in the hills, and the next year his bowie with its notches was found with his skeleton in the hills.

I must get the book out and read it again some time.

— ECHOES AND RUMORS —

We hear that Brother Smeltzer's sour-kraut factory is now a thing of the past. Reason being that Bob has recently been ordained a Deacon in the Holy Rollers, a full time job with time out only for lunch.

Brothers Bragin and French will soon announce that they have pooled

their resources (and dime novels) and are becoming partners in a new beer-garden soon to be opened in New York. These two men have been firm friends for years, in fact since kindergarten days, and I am sure that the entire Brotherhood joins me in the best of wishes for the two pals in their new venture.

Has Brother Smith been deceiving us all these years? We now learn that in addition to collecting dime novels Ralph has for years been collecting stray tom-cats. Are they for trade Ralph? And how can you afford to keep on file such an expensive collection with the price of liver what it is?

Our Chicago correspondent writes us that our very good friend Charles Jonas has sold a large part of his novels to provide a trust fund to finance a home for colored orphans.

For years we have known our old friend's extreme and deep love for little children. And often he has shed tears (and tobacco juice) on our manly bosom, while he has sobbed out the fact that in all his life he has been denied the chance to become a father, or a mother. Now what we are wondering is, why a home for pickin-ninies, instead of one for white kids? Has there been a dark shadow somewhere in his hectic past, or is there "a nigger in the wood pile" somewhere? Fie, fie Chut, do you care to explain yourself?

A recent Schenectady daily paper contained the following ad:

"WANTED—A wife or a bowl of gold fish; A case of ale or a pink elephant. Will trade dime novels or sex literature for any of my wants. Write or telephone Bob Frye, Morgan Ave., Schenectady, N. Y."

Bill Burns' great masterpiece, "Down by the Railroad Track; or, Dirty Doin's After Dark" has at last been published. Fifty dollars per copy, satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. Send cash to the author for an autographed copy. Don't bother the publisher as he is now recuperating in jail.

Due to war conditions our good friend P. J. Moran has lost his job in the limburger factory and has now joined the Ringling Bros. Circus as a bare-back rider. Mr. Moran also does an "Annie Oakley" act with his huge scatter-gun with the aid of a

wooden Indian. We are anxiously awaiting the circus' Eastern tour as we shall sure enjoy seeing Pat (he weighs 300 pounds) prancing around in a ballet costume.

We hear that our old friend "Ed" Sissing is contemplating matrimony. Congratulations and best of wishes Ed. If you can stand it for ten years and still retain all your hair and facial beauty then you can declare that matrimony is the berries. But if at the end of that time you find yourself minus an ear or two, and with possibly only one eye, you can decide that you made a slight error in life.

We hear that a sight was recently seen on the streets of Grafton never seen before. It was our old pard Roaring Ralph with a very charming young lady draped on his left arm, stepping along with heads very close together, and utterly obvious to everything around them.

Alas Pard, we knew something terrible would happen to you someday, when we learned that you had taken that job in the woolen mill.

We hear that a prominent Philadelphia collector has pawned, at Brother Anderson's "Sign of the Three Golden Balls," his complete file of Wide Awake Library.

When questioned by our reporter he stated he was raising funds to finance bigger and better night clubs for young widows and co-eds.

We have not heard from Bro. Couch for a long time. Could he have been offended about our reference to his vivid red whiskers? If so, the most abject apologies Brother Couch. But frankly, and most sincerely, the last time we saw you we were struck by your great resemblance to "Handsome Harry" of Diamond Dick fame. Some whiskers Bert.

Brother Sahr's glue factory is again running full time. Japan has contracted for his full output. They need it badly at Guadalcanal to patch themselves up. Also a lot of their battle-ships need similar repairs. In spite of the government ruling about yearly incomes, George expects to become a millionaire in a few months.

A recent letter from Dean Maroske suggests that now that Gandhi is in the dog house we discard the breech-clout as our Brotherhood uniform, as various citizens might consider us unpatriotic if we continue to wear same.

Mr. Maroske suggests that we adopt instead the tribal dress of the ancient Hop Indians.

For shame Paul. Have you consulted your history lately?

It is our impression that these old time Hopi braves wore little besides a gee-string. Hardly a suitable costume for Bill Burns, Jihn Roulett, S. B. Condon, Eddie Smart and C. B. Hamilton, as their rigorous climate down in Maine call for something warmer than a gee-string at this time of year.

However it's up to a vote fellows, what do you say? Shall we continue to wear the breech clout or the gee-string? Or are any other suggestions offered? If so write the publisher, not the editor of this "colyum."

Speaking of widows, our reporter tells us that often on moon-light nights, Charley Austin is seen with his guitar tucked under his arm, hanging around the back porch of the Home for Aged Women. ("Romeo where art thou").

NEWSY NEWS

By Ye Editor

Send 50c in stamps to Frank A. Munsey, 280 Broadway, New York City, N. Y. for Cowboy Novel Thrillers, Nos. 1 to 4. No. 4 is the last number, and all are worthy of any one's collection.

The Frank Reade Stories in Wide Awake Library are very scarce, so are the Jesse James Stories in the same Library, or try and buy Diamond Dick Library with real D. D. stories in them.

The "Argosy" has been bought by "Adventure" magazine, and if you get a copy of the January Adventure Magazine you will see on pag 43, an illustration of the first number 1, of Golden Argosy, that came out in 1882. 60 years of publishing is a long time. Ye editor has some Vols. 5 and others on hand.

Wide Awake Library #541, Frank Reade's Steam Man, has no back covers, only where the story ends. A lot of Wide Awakes and Comic Libraries, yes, even Log Cabin Libraries were the same.

Guess I've got myself into a mess. Bill Hahn is on the road so much that he hasn't the time to answer all the letters sent him, so he's turning

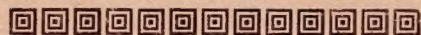
novels and letters over to one of the Brother's to sell them for him. This Brother will answer all letters.

Many of the Brothers liked the tribute in our January issue, on the dear ones of the fold, that have gone to the great beyond.

Charlie Jonas writes—Should you want to see a really nice lot of novels illustrated in a sheet issued by "The Home Fleet of Insurance Companies," 59 Maiden Lane, New York, it is worth your while. Have them send you No. 6 of the December 1942 issue. Printed on white enameled paper, 17 cuts and an article under the caption "Remember? Adventure for a Dime."

Just thing, Edwin Sissung and his bride are all hitched now. They were married up in Wisconsin in the latter part of November, 1942. Three cheers for Ed and Annie.

J. C. Dykes, 4511 Guilford Road, College Park, Md., H. H. B. #154, just joined up with us. He's a collector of Rangers and Arizona items.



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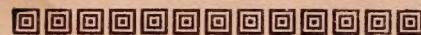
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